

Bloomington Community Farmers' Market Advisory Council

Monday, June 17, 2013
5:00 pm

Parks Conference Room

Advisory Council Members Present

Bobbi Boos, Michael Salem, Susan Welsand, Sarah Ryterband, Janice Lilly, Linda Chapman, Daniel Young, Geoff Grodner, Julia DeBruicker Valliant.

Market/City Staff

Marcia Veldman, Les Coyne, Robin Hobson and Sasha Divine.

1. Call to Order

Janice called the meeting to order.

2. Approval of Minutes

The March 2013 minutes were approved.

3. Public Comment

No public comment.

4. Reports

A. Friend of the Farmers' Market (FOM) – This program was launched at the Holiday Market in 2012. A starting transfer was made into the FOM Foundation account of donated funds that were left over from the start-up of the Market Bucks program in 2007. Since then, only a few donations have been made to date. The Foundation is planning to have a promotional FOM presence at various events and tastings this season at the Market. Sarah asked if there was anything else being done to promote this. Marcia responded that it has been in the e-newsletter, at the Market Info Table, and on the new Foundation website as well. In addition, the Foundation promotes FOM at its events.

B. Double Your Market Bucks – The Market has had great success with this program getting healthy, fresh foods to people who need it most. At the same time, this activity has called for more administrative time to manage. In 2012, \$5,100 in Market Bucks were distributed with an average of five patrons per week. This season, the average is 25 customers per week and already last year's total has been exceeded; with Double Your Market Bucks, \$9612 in vouchers have been distributed so far this year. Tuesday Market had 12 users getting Market Bucks all last season. In 2013, this was exceeded during the first two weeks. Robin is working on procuring a wireless machine to expedite the process at TM with funding available from the state. IU Health will be doubling WIC farmers' market benefits by giving vouchers good for \$18 in Market Bucks. Positive Link clients will also receive the voucher. \$1500 in Market Bucks has been purchased to date, but IU Health has pledged to purchase more when that amount runs out. The Community Kitchen gave out 250 vouchers good for \$10 in gift certificates to be redeemed at Market. All these efforts are separately tracked to assess success. Megan Betz wrote an article about these programs for InStride Magazine that appeared in early June.

C. Info Alley Concern – Teresa Birtles had a concern over Oberweis Dairy participating in Information Alley based on potential competition with Vendor products. As things stand now, Oberweis will continue to participate under their signed agreement. There will be further discussion of this topic when changes for 2014 are discussed.

D. Farm Inspection – A new vendor was inspected based on some concerns of staff and a customer that invasive plant were being brought for sale at Market. On another occasion, the same vendor was observed selling a prohibited craft-type item from their stall. Staff also noticed a quality change in the plants offered at this stall and so it was decided to make a farm inspection. The site inspection revealed all was in compliance with the plants. Some previous year's purchased plants had been held over for 2013 and the vendor had the records to support this activity. The evidence indicated that she was raising all nursery plants. She was apprised of the invasive plant policy and other rules and will be allowed to continue selling approved goods at Market.

5. New Business

A. Function of FMAC – Janice reminded the group that the FMAC is an advisory, not a decision-making, group. Decisions are made by staff or the Parks Board and the FMAC is in place to discuss and advise on them. Over 17 years, Marcia could recall only 3-4 instances where the Parks Board or the staff went contrary to the recommendations of the Council. This record indicates that decisions are made by listening to and weighing the FMAC members' input.

B. Parking – A bike parking report was made by Marcia. With the development of the B-Line trail was communication from staff regarding the need for bike parking at the Market. The City has been hesitant to install permanent racks for a five hour event held once a week. A solution that the Market has been using is a number of temporary bike racks are used on Market days to accommodate bike parking. Recently, an additional six permanent racks were installed on Morton St. and these will be monitored for usage on Saturdays to determine if more need to be installed. Sarah suggested putting a bracket on the temporary racks to prevent them from collapsing flat. Janice wondered if signage could be helpful with directing people to available racks at various entrances. There is a funding possibility for monies to operate a "bike check" program on Saturdays to alleviate the issue. Staff is hopeful this will come through as a solution. It was suggested to post parking opportunities for bicyclists on Facebook.

C. Green America Contest/ Parks & Recreation Procedures for Publicity/ Communication Among FMAC Members – Janice reviewed some events and communications around the recent Green America Contest. She reviewed some facts - on April 25, Susan sent Marcia an email informing her selection as a finalist in the Green America online voting contest and noted it would be nice if the Department could promote the contest and her involvement in it. There were subsequent discussions around this request by those who manage Department public relations about whether this was an appropriate action. Marcia suggested that it was appropriate to share information via social media. On May 2, Susan sent Marcia the contest link for promotion along with a request to place this on the Market e-newsletter and Facebook page. Initial discussion of the issue within the Department was based on this request. Parks PR staff decided to post this on Facebook and to move Susan to the featured Vendor of the Week the week of

May 13. Subsequent email exchanges occurred around the fact that the Vendor of the Week was one day late in the posting. Precedent was an important consideration for the Department as a whole regarding this and other similar requests from parties connected to it and how they would be treated in the future.

Susan had commented that all other content was updated in the weekly e-newsletter except for her profile on Monday and that her profile was not posted until Tuesday. She was also concerned that a full description of the contest was not posted in the newsletter. She felt the values of the contest were important to promote – sustainability and green business - and that these were not promoted to the extent she would have liked. Susan was concerned that the other Vendors did not know about the contest as she felt they would want to support a fellow vendor in the contest. Daniel asked what other things did she want that were not done. She replied that she wanted it put in the Market Beet and the other Vendors emailed about the contest. Janice noted that the Market Beet, which has a regular schedule, was not due for publication at the time this transpired. Geoff thought the City should have promoted this contest as if the Market was a true business and thus making use of any and all opportunities for promotion (press releases, etc.). His opinion was the Market missed an opportunity for promotion by not giving more exposure to one Market vendor in a national contest. Linda countered by asking why the Market is not promoting events and green weddings at her farm or all other sustainable things farmers do outside the Market? Geoff thought the national focus was what made the difference between Susan's contest and these other items.

Janice said there was discretion used in this instance and that it is OK to disagree, but the Department, after considering the situation arrived at a decision. Sarah asked if this meant that the Department is not interested in promoting the Market at all. Les responded that the long-standing stance of the Parks Board is that they do not promote private, individual enterprise. Under special circumstances, they will promote businesses that are partnered, via contract, with the Department. The policies that govern this type issue are those of a public entity and not of a public/private enterprise. Tax payer's money should not be used to benefit a private enterprise. Les noted the success of the Market and how he would not like to see that jeopardized in any way by spending Department resources on promotion for private interests. Susan noted that the most recent Market Beet had a paragraph that announced her success with the contest and asked, was that not a use of staff time to promote her interests? Janice said no, as she composed that piece of the newsletter. Les made it clear that if the budget for the Market is spent on extra promotion, Vendor fees must certainly go up.

Daniel pointed out that, going forward, the FMAC may want to put a policy in place for these types of promotions and what kind of things would we hope to get out of it. He asked how much the Market really stands to gain from promotions of this sort. He added that looking at how communication has happened in the past and how it could happen better in the future would be beneficial. On the topic of communication, Julia said there is an expectation that because electronic communication can now be very fast paced, that it should be so with the Department, but that runs contrary to how PR is done. A policy that clearly defines what kind of response the Department could give should be examined.

Janice suggested the marketing subcommittee re-convene to examine what type of recommendation regarding promotion, particularly regarding social media promotion, the Council would like to put forward. Les brought up the utilization of overlay entities that

could help with promotion such as the Convention and Visitors Bureau. Julia mentioned that a question that should be asked: Is the staff responsible for promoting the Market which they are also producing and, if so, to what extent? Janice called for the marketing subcommittee to explore what policies to bring to the Parks Board and Market staff about how the Market is promoted, with particular attention given to the question of what to do when that promotion has to do with, or is about, a particular Vendor. Marcia suggested the subcommittee also include those Parks staff involved in marketing for the Department. Council members who were interested in being on this committee were Bobbi, Daniel, and Janice.

Janice spoke about how communication happened among Council members over the Green America topic. Some of the emails that she and Marcia received and which circulated had a very strident, critical and disrespectful tone to them. She requested that when there are differing opinions that these be expressed with respect and that the information is correct in the discussion. She pointed out that after she communicated to the group what Parks would be doing to promote Green America, there were seven instances where emails stated nothing was being done at the Market. There was also a column in the paper that said the same. She implored the group to portray matters in an accurate manner. Marcia apologized to Susan for the delay in staff getting her Vendor Profile updated. She also said there were attempts to follow through on Susan's requests, to the extent the Department was comfortable with and able to do, with the intention of being supportive of Susan's entry into the contest. Linda said she was upset and stunned by the stridency of the emails which she felt were fairly brutal. She underscored the need for respectfulness and diplomacy to override emotion in the discussion of issues. Susan justified this by saying she felt "dissembled to" because her Vendor Profile was not updated until May 29. Les addressed Susan saying if she was not pleased with what goes on in the Council, that she should resign.

Janice reminded the group that emails sent to only one person on the Council are still public record and if she or Marcia feel it is appropriate, they can be shared with everybody on the Council. She asked that members think twice before sending emails which are incendiary. In closing, Janice read three responsibilities and duties from the by-laws that all members agreed to when joining the Council: First, "assist the Board of Park Commissioners in communicating to the citizens using the BCFM policies and rationale supporting Board decisions in the operation of the BCFM." (In other words, when the Board makes a decision, the group supports that.) Second, "assist the Parks staff in relaying information to and from individuals and the community regarding the BCFM." Lastly, "work with local, state and national public and private organizations in a mutually cooperative manner for the betterment of the BCFM."

6. Adjournment